

Kluge House
540 West Main Street
Helena
Lewis & Clark County
Montana

HABS No. MON-17

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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KLUGE HOUSE

Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Montana

ADDRESS: 540 West Main St., Helena, Montana
OWNER: J. F. Thompson
OCCUPANT: none
USE: none

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This house is a rare specimen of log and half-timber construction (Fachwerkbau) of a type found in Prussia. It was built in the early 1880's by Emil Kluge, a man who had emigrated to America from Germany. Kluge settled in Helena and built this house after the fashion of his home land.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Emil Kluge was born in Prussia on March 28, 1845, and was educated in the public schools of that country. He served Germany in two wars -- the Austrian War in 1866 and the Franco-Prussian in which he was slightly wounded in 1870. After being discharged from the infantry, he married and emigrated to the United States with his wife.

They settled first in Detroit, Michigan, where they remained for two years, then went west. Kluge reached Helena on May 3, 1873, engaged in mining with indifferent success, then took up contracting. In the summer of 1876 he joined a group of gold seekers traveling to the Black Hills. He had no better luck prospecting there than he had in Helena, so returned shortly to his family which had stayed behind.

In the early 1880's Kluge built this house with the first story of hewn squared logs and a second story of half-timber work, a style that is particularly characteristic of the Silesian region of Prussia.

Kluge resided in Helena until his death September 26, 1924. At various times he again tried mining, operated a stone quarry, did contracting and street grading. He served a term as street commissioner for the city, was once a constable, and was elected Justice of the Peace for two terms. In 1892 he was elected secretary of King Solomon's Lodge No. 9, A.F. & A.M., and served in this capacity for 32 years. He also held the position of secretary for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

The house, now vacant, remains as a reminder of pioneer architecture which often was built in the style most familiar to the settlers. In this case, the builder came from across the ocean and brought with him the style of his native country.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND REFERENCES

- Helena City Directories, 1884 to 1893.
Helena Daily Independent, Helena, Mont., Sept. 26, 1924.
Helena Journal, Helena, Mont., July, 1891.
Perrin, Richard W. E., Historic Wisconsin Buildings, Milwaukee Public Museum, Publications in History No. 4, 1962.
Perrin, Richard W. E., FAIA, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, personal communications.
Sanders, H. F., A History of Montana, Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, vol. II, p. 1040, 1913.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Kluge house with its first story of hewn, squared logs and the superimposed second story of half-timber work is quite characteristic of Silesian (Prussia) construction and is seldom found even in other parts of Germany. The building is a great rarity and may be considered exceptionally important because of its unique construction.

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - A two story building, first floor of hewn squared logs and a second floor of half-timber filled in with bricks, rectangular in plan measuring 30'-11" x 16'-4".

Foundation - Native stone.

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Wall Construction - First floor: hewn, squared logs, 9" to 10" in size with halved corners, blockhouse type of log construction. Second floor: half-timber and masonry construction. Hewn, squared logs similar to those on the first floor form the corners and midpoints and are braced by diagonal logs forming panels. These panels are filled with a brick cavity wall having a 2" air space between the outer and inner single thicknesses of brick.

Openings - Entrances: the building has a front (east-south-east facade) door and a rear (west-northwest) door. The front door is a 2'-8" x 6'-8" paneled door with two vertical lights (glass now gone) having circular heads. The door has a rectangular transom light, 10" x 2'-4" above. The rear door is missing -- no transom above.

The door of the second floor, reached only by an exterior staircase which has been partially destroyed, is also missing.

Windows: 2/2 double hung wood windows. On the front facade there are two floor to almost ceiling high window frames on the second floor.

Roof - Simple gable wood-shingled roof having a pitch of approximately $33\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$. Rafters are full-sized 2 x 4's set on 16" centers.

Chimney - Brick.

INTERIOR

Floor Plans - The front door, asymmetrically located, leads into a small vestibule 3'-7" wide and 3'-6" deep having two doors, one leading to the left (south) into the largest of the ground floor's two rooms -- this room measures 13'-4" x 14'-4".

The other door leads into the second first floor room which is 14'-10" x 14'-4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". A hatch leads to a cellar 6' x 12' below this room. The vestibule is taken out of a corner of this room. In the north-northwest corner is the rear door.

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A shed has been attached to the north of this second room and a doorway cut between the two. The shed is not considered significant. The location of the chimney flue (projecting into this room), the cellar and the shed addition would suggest that this was the kitchen and eating area while the other room must have been the living room. The ceiling height of the first floor is 9'-0".

The second floor plan is similar to that of the first floor but is reversed. It has two large rooms, but the vestibule with its two doors is on the rear side of the building. Ceiling height is 8'-4".

Flooring - A 1" x 5" T & G pine floor laid over a sub-floor of 1" x 5" T & G boards. The first floor has floor joists of full dimension 2 x 8's, 16" centers, while the second floor as full dimension 2 x 10 floor joists, 16" on center.

Wall and Ceiling Finish - Plaster. The plaster is applied directly on the brick and averages 1" thick.

Doors - Wood, four paneled doors.

Trim - Ornately carved, typical of the trim used in the 1880's, 1890's and early 1900's.

Hardware - Cast iron.

Lighting - Electric.

Heating - Wood stoves.

GENERAL SETTING

The Kluge House is located in the south-southwest section of Helena on West Main Street. According to records in the Assessor's Office, the site is 152' (along W. Main) by 40'. The rear boundary of the lot is formed by rock cliffs that rise about as high as the two story building itself.

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